

TERRARIUM



A terrarium is an enclosed ecosystem.

Creating a terrarium is an interesting and educational project, because it clearly illustrates how an ecosystem works. A terrarium is a closed ecosystem—like our planet, but on a smaller scale. Inside, many different processes occur and interact - including: photosynthesis, respiration, and the water cycle.

A closed environment helps us better understand what impact living organisms and their environments have on each other. With the help of the sun's energy and photosynthesis, plants produce their own food. The water in the terrarium is constantly recycled, passing from liquid form to gas and back again, as the moisture in the air condenses on the glass walls, returns to the soil and is absorbed by the plants' roots.

CREATE AND MAINTAIN YOUR OWN TERRARIUM:

Choose a clear glass vessel of any kind, preferably one that comes with a lid and provides enough space for your landscape scene.

Cover the bottom of the container with one to two inches of gravel or stone for drainage.

Add a good potting soil, filling the container to about half its height (the plants need to have enough room to grow).

Arrange a selection of plants inside—be careful not to overcrowd. The best plants for terrariums are small, slow-growing varieties.

Choose a grouping that has similar light, temperature and humidity requirements. See list of plant suggestions.

Finish with moss, decorative pebbles, twigs, butterflies, fairies, etc.

Seal the container with a clear lid or cover, such as the top of an apothecary jar, a clear plate or piece of clear plastic.

Keep the terrarium in indirect light, and water it sparingly only when beads of moisture no longer form on the glass. Don't overwater. The plants will create their own moisture through evaporation. Should the terrarium get too wet or too hot, open the cover slightly.

Maintain plants regularly by removing dead leaves and branches before they start to rot. When plants reach the desired size, pinch off the new growth.

